Community Asset Mapping

What?

In Spring 2016 the City's Planning, Neighborhood Development and Communications departments joined forces with the Resilience Office to launch workshops and an online campaign to ask residents "What Do You Love?" about Norfolk. The effort sought to assess and map Norfolk's most important assets – places, people, events and other aspects of neighborhoods and the city itself – that make Norfolk strong and a great place to live.

Why?

Over time, communities change. We wanted to identify assets to protect, strengthen, replicate, grow and nurture as the city evolves into an even greater place to live, work and play. An Asset Mapping exercise – identifying and plotting those features -- was designed to understand what makes people choose this city and their neighborhoods. Then we can build on the assets that make Norfolk a great place to live -- not the individual buildings or spaces, but what happens in those buildings and spaces—*that* is the experience people are buying in Norfolk and what makes them stay here.

Cities compete for diverse residents including millennials, retirees, and families. People choose where they live, assessing factors such as housing, neighborhood, city and region. Their choice includes a decision on the experience they believe they are buying. People do not buy a beautiful house in a neighborhood they do not want to live in—no matter how great the house is. Likewise, residents do not choose to live in a neighborhood in which they feel unwelcome, that does not share their values, and does not have the amenities that make their lives good.

How?

Residents provided information about what makes Norfolk great during six asset mapping hands-on workshops, through an online survey and on social media including Facebook and Twitter.

What Did We Learn?

A lot of people had a lot to say about why they love their neighborhoods and Norfolk as a whole. In small workshop groups around the city, through an online survey and social media, people easily identified what they valued about Norfolk and why.

Number of Participants: Approximately 530 participants, in person or via survey or social media
Data Collected: Nearly 4,000 data points collected

The collected data demonstrates that a combination of assets - including places, events, people and things - and the experiences these assets provide make Norfolk strong and a great place to live. The list below describes the Top 7 high level takeaways across all the datasets, along with a snapshot of residents' comments:

Top 7 Takeaways:
- **Focus on a Combination of Assets**: Residents value *Events* (such as festivals, sporting events, neighborhood activities), *People* (such as formal and informal community leaders) and *Things* (characteristics such as diversity, history vibe, accessibility, walkability.) For instance, how can we capitalize on and combine people's love for affordable world class art events, diversity of people and

cuisine, sense of history, accessibility, walkability, the Tide, interaction with nature and a waterway view in an event, demo project, neighborhood revitalization/redevelopment effort?

- **Focus on Experience**: A person's specific experience with a place creates value. For instance, Norfolk Zoo and Botanical Gardens scored high among assets due to their aesthetic appearance, beautiful views, native plant material, interaction with animals and the impact they had on childhood memories.
- **Protect and Strengthen Green**: Participants identified interaction with and experience derived from natural elements such as green and open spaces including parks, gardens and other outdoor venues and easy accessibility to these spaces as among the city's most important assets. Family time, exercise, escape from the city, gathering with friends, connectivity to nature and other people, feeling of inclusiveness were the most common experiences associated with these physical places.
- **Focus on Water**: Water appears to be an undervalued asset. While residents across all datasets datasets (workshops, survey, social media) identified interaction with water, including access to, enjoyment and economic utility of waterways, waterfront, city staff had expected to hear more about Norfolk's water-related assets. Beaches in particular seem to be a largely "forgotten" asset.
- **Preserve Diversity of People, Places, Events, Things and Overall Experience:** Pride in diversity of people (including ethnicity, ages, professions such as the military and young entrepreneurs) restaurants/cuisine, affordable (and yet world class) arts, sport and other community events, shopping opportunities, views, modern versus historic were consistently identified as major assets.
- **Preserve and Enhance Accessibility and Connectivity**: Easy access to the places, events and things noted above was identified as a key asset. The TIDE light rail, walkability and biking were the most frequently mentioned assets related to accessibility.
- **Protect Opportunities that Allow People to Build Human Capital, Social Cohesion and Connect with Each Other:** Neighborhood, arts, sports and other community events and other opportunities that bring strangers, neighbors, friends, university students, military personal, families, entrepreneurs, civic leagues and other community members together were consistently ranked as major assets. Friendliness, openness and progressiveness of Norfolk residents, community groups and community formal and informal leaders were key characteristics and experiences people valued.

How Will Asset Data Be Used?

The collected asset data will inform a number of key initiatives:

- **Neighbors Building Neighborhoods**: Neighborhood Development will use the data for neighborhood community revitalization efforts. Neighborhood stakeholders (residents, businesses, nonprofits, city staff, etc.) will work together to build on identified neighborhood strengths.
- **Vision 2100**: The city's Planning Department will use the data and work with residents to create a long-term land use plan for the city — informing development, zoning, infrastructure investments, etc. in light of changing economic, demographic and sea level rise conditions. Collected data provide information about assets that the city should protect, strengthen, or replicate to ensure that they remain part of the future Norfolk. Later this Spring, the collected data will be used during another set of community meetings during which the city departments will work with residents to develop the vision in Norfolk in the 22nd century and beyond. The vision will represent a new chapter in plaNorfolk2030.
- **Long-term Recovery Plan**: The Department of Emergency Management and Response will use the findings to inform the development of the long-term recovery plan.

- **Overall Resilience Efforts as Applicable –** The Resilience Office will use the data to inform initiatives to advance the three overarching resilience goals as applicable: Create the coastal community of the future; Create economic opportunities by advancing efforts to grow existing and new industry sectors; Advance initiatives to connect communities.